**Gosport Borough Hockey Club – 2018 to 2019 Season**

It all started very early with the Club’s return to St Vincent College. And it was to a shiny newly-laid pitch! This was celebrated by the Club on 30 June when we were joined by players from England Hockey, Hockey for Heroes and the Navy, to name but a few. It was a great day which was made possible by an army of volunteers – Club members who freely gave of their time and energy to make it happen. Even the sun gave a helping hand!

At the start of the season we had our usual six adult teams entered in the Hampshire leagues. However, from the very beginning, the captains struggled to field all the teams as there was just not enough players available on Saturdays. We fought hard to keep going with some players juggling diaries and criss-crossing the county to help out but inevitably matches were cancelled. After much discussion and soul-searching, we reluctantly accepted the reality of the situation and removed our Women’s and Men’s third teams from the leagues. This required some adjustment of players and organisation but over time this has, largely, bedded in.

We should not feel that this is unique to us. Far from it, other clubs across the country, not only in hockey but other sports – especially team sports – are having to face up to having less players and club volunteers.

The junior side of the Club, especially in the younger age groups, is going on from strength to strength. Children are turning up wanting to give hockey a try – often after hearing about how good the game, and the Club, is from friends or relations. This happens through the efforts and enthusiasm of not only the coaches and other volunteers but also the parents who support and encourage participation.

This season the Club has given us all the opportunity to play hockey and do so – whether in victory or (frequently) defeat – in good company.

Alistair Nichols

Club Chair